

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

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BILL: SB 436

INTRODUCER: Senator Hooper

SUBJECT: Use of Vessel Registration Fees

DATE: March 25, 2019

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Peacock</u>	<u>Yeatman</u>	<u>CA</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	<u>Anderson</u>	<u>Rogers</u>	<u>EN</u>	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
3.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 436 expands the authorized uses of the county vessel registration fees to include channel and other navigational dredging; the construction, expansion, or maintenance of public boat ramps and other public water access facilities; and associated engineering and permitting costs.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Vessel Registration**

The term “vessel” is synonymous with boat as referenced in s. 1(b), Art. VII of the State Constitution<sup>1</sup> and includes every description of watercraft, barge, or airboat, other than a seaplane on the water, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.<sup>2</sup> Vessels operated, used, or stored on the waters of this state must be registered with the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) as a commercial or recreational<sup>3</sup> vessel, unless:

- The vessel is operated, used, and stored exclusively on private lakes and ponds;
- The vessel is owned by the U.S. Government;
- The vessel is used exclusively as a ship’s lifeboat; or
- The vessel is non-motor-powered and less than 16 feet in length or a non-motor-powered canoe, kayak, racing shell, or rowing scull, regardless of length.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FLA. CONST. art. VII, s.1(b) provides that motor vehicles, boats, airplanes, trailers, trailer coaches and mobile homes, as defined by law, shall be subject to a license tax for their operation in the amounts and for the purposes prescribed by law, but shall not be subject to ad valorem taxes.

<sup>2</sup> Section 327.02(46), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Section 327.02(40), F.S., defines a “recreational vessel” as a vessel manufactured and used primarily for noncommercial purposes, or a vessel leased, rented, or chartered to a person for his or her noncommercial use.

<sup>4</sup> Section 328.48(2), F.S.

Section 328.72(12), F.S., provides that vessel registration periods are for 12 or 24 months. An individual who owns a vessel is eligible to register the vessel for a 12 or 24 month period that begins the first day of the birth month of the owner and ends the last day of the month preceding the owner's birth month. The registration period for vessels owned by companies, corporations, governmental entities, and registrations issued to dealers and manufacturers is July 1 to June 30.<sup>5</sup>

The base registration fee for vessels is determined by the length of the vessel. The vessel registration fee for a 12-month period is as follows:

- *Class A-1*: Less than 12 feet in length and all canoes to which propulsion motors have been attached, regardless of length: \$5.50;
- *Class A-2*: 12 feet or more and less than 16 feet in length: \$16.25;
- *Class 1*: 16 feet or more and less than 26 feet in length: \$28.75;
- *Class 2*: 26 feet or more and less than 40 feet in length: \$78.25;
- *Class 3*: 40 feet or more and less than 65 feet in length: \$127.75;
- *Class 4*: 65 feet or more and less than 110 feet in length: \$152.75;
- *Class 5*: 110 feet or more in length: \$189.75; and
- *Dealer Registration Certificate*: \$25.50.<sup>6</sup>

A portion of the state vessel registration fees for recreational vessels is distributed to county governments.<sup>7</sup> Of the portion designated for counties, \$1 is remitted to the state for deposit into the Save the Manatee Trust Fund created within the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and \$1 is remitted to the state for deposit into the Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund to fund a grant program for public launching facilities, with priority consideration given to counties with more than 35,000 registered vessels.<sup>8</sup>

The remainder of the funds going to counties must be used for specific boating-related purposes:

- Providing, maintaining, or operating recreational channel marking and other uniform waterway markers, public boat ramps, lifts, hoists, marine railways, boat piers, docks, mooring buoys, and other public launching facilities; and
- Removing derelict vessels, debris that specifically impede boat access, not including the dredging of channels, and vessels and floating structures deemed a hazard to public safety and health.<sup>9</sup>

### **Local Vessel Registration Fees**

In addition to the state vessel registration fees above, any county may impose an annual registration fee on vessels registered, operated, used, or stored on waters within its jurisdiction. This fee is 50 percent of the applicable state registration fee as provided in s. 328.72(1), F.S., and not the reduced vessel registration fee specified in s. 328.72(18), F.S.<sup>10</sup> The first \$1 of every

<sup>5</sup> Section 328.72(12)(c)2., F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 328.72(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Section 328.72(1), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 328.72(15), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> State vessel registration fees are reduced for recreational vessels equipped with an emergency position-indicating radio beacon registered with the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) or whose owner owns a personal locator beacon registered with the NOAA.

county registration fee must be remitted to the state for deposit into the Save the Manatee Trust Fund created within the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.<sup>11</sup> The remainder of the optional county fee is retained by the county where the vessel is registered and is to be used for patrol, regulation, and maintenance of the lakes, rivers, and waters and for other boating-related activities within the county.<sup>12</sup> A county which imposes a vessel registration fee may share such proceeds with one or more municipalities within the county pursuant to an interlocal agreement to fund authorized boating-related projects.<sup>13</sup>

Currently, 15 counties have elected to impose the local vessel registration fee. The following chart summarizes the associated revenue by county for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-2019.<sup>14</sup>

<b>County</b>	<b>FY 18-19</b>
Broward	\$348,657.83
Charlotte	\$162,291.76
Collier	\$161,248.00
Hardee	\$ 4,314.81
Hillsborough	\$261,766.16
Lee	\$350,021.31
Manatee	\$137,603.99
Martin	\$145,050.98
Miami-Dade	\$575,512.73
Monroe	\$224,956.67
Palm Beach	\$270,853.06
Pinellas	\$335,436.88
Polk	\$184,755.27
Sarasota	\$153,898.38
Volusia	\$166,786.14
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$3,483,153.97</b>

### **Regulation of Dredging**

Dredging means excavation in wetlands or other surface waters or excavation in uplands that creates wetlands or other surface waters.<sup>15</sup> Any activity on or over wetlands and other surface waters (dredging and filling) is regulated by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the five water management districts (Northwest Florida, Suwannee River, St. Johns River, Southwest Florida, and South Florida) through the Environmental Resources Permitting (ERP) program. Dredging and filling is also regulated by the federal government under a separate program administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The process is initiated by submitting a joint (interagency) application to DEP or to one of the above water management districts. The appropriate agency is determined by a division of responsibilities specified in Operating Agreements between the agencies. Upon receipt of the application by DEP or water

<sup>11</sup> Section 328.66(1), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> Section 328.66(2), F.S.

<sup>14</sup> Email from Kevin Jacobs, Deputy Legislative Affairs Director, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, RE: SB 436, (February 15, 2019) (Copy on file with the Senate Committee on Community Affairs).

<sup>15</sup> Department of Environmental Protection, *ERP Dredging and Filling*, available at <https://floridadep.gov/water/submerged-lands-environmental-resources-coordination/content/erp-dredging-and-filling> (last visited on Mar. 17, 2019).

management district, a copy is also forwarded to the Corps to initiate the federal permitting process.<sup>16</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

**Section 1** of the bill amends s. 328.66, F.S., to authorize a county to use a portion of vessel registration fees for additional purposes that may include channel and other navigational dredging; the construction, expansion, or maintenance of public boat ramps and other public water access facilities; and associated engineering and permitting costs.

**Section 2** provides that the bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

### V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

If additional counties elect to impose the local vessel registration fees, there may be a negative fiscal impact on vessel owners within a county's jurisdiction.

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<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

There may be a positive fiscal impact on counties that elect to impose the optional local vessel registration fee. Additional counties may consider imposing this fee due to the expansion of authorized uses under the bill.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 328.66 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.